

# **EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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### **REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY AT THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION FOR RADIO TODAY October 26, 2008**

**DHAKA, OCTOBER 26** --- U.S. Ambassador James F. Moriarty made the following remarks at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Celebration for Radio Today in Dhaka today:

(Begin Text)

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: Assalam-u-Alaikum and good evening. It is a pleasure for me to join you tonight to celebrate Radio Today's second anniversary.

In just two years, Radio Today has become one of the country's premier media organizations. Through an excellent array of news and entertainment programming, the station provides an important service to the 20 million people in its listening area.

The U.S. Embassy is proud of the strong relationship we enjoy with Radio Today. Since March, Radio Today has been broadcasting 20 minutes of Voice of America (VOA) programming daily. The five-minute Bangla and 15 minute English language news broadcasts continue a tradition of VOA broadcasting in Bangladesh dating back more than 50 years. These VOA broadcasts provide accurate and timely information on current events, education, and culture around the world to millions of listeners in Bangladesh.

In addition to airing the VOA broadcasts, Radio Today also hosts a monthly program featuring interviews with members of the U.S. Embassy community. To date, the station has featured programs focusing on the role of women in the U.S., the benefits of studying in the U.S. and the diversity visa lottery. Just this afternoon one of our officers spoke about next week's U.S. elections. We believe that these programs offer Radio Today listeners an opportunity to understand America better.

In addition to supporting programming, the U.S. government works with the media to help improve the quality of their reporting and management.

To that end, the International Broadcasting Bureau recently completed a workshop for Radio Today staff on broadcast journalism, production and management. I understand that the workshop was a great success. We look forward to seeing a great product become even better.

Some might ask why the United States is so actively engaged in helping the media in Bangladesh. I reply: the United States believes that the right of the people to speak out through a free press is the cornerstone of a democratic society.

Indeed, a great Founding Father, and President of the United States said "*Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.*" Mr. Jefferson was a firm believer in democracy. His point withstood the scrutiny of a free press and no elected legislature could remain truly democratic without such scrutiny.

America's freedom of the press is enshrined in our Constitution, in our First Amendment which states that there shall be no law abrogating or limiting or preventing freedom of the press. Accordingly, we do not have any state control of the media, and Americans constantly debate what role our media should play.

The press has emerged as America's self-appointed monitor of official life, recorder of public events, and unofficial arbiter of public behavior. The Constitution's protections and the tradition of liberty enjoyed in the United States have allowed public expression to flourish.

Based on the success of our experience, the United States supports press freedom worldwide. We value freedom of the press as a key component of democratic governance. Democratic societies, including our own, have faults, but a free press ensures accountability. There is almost nothing in our country that is not eventually revealed in the press. This is a critical element in accountable democratic governance. Secretary Rice has stated, "*In a democracy the citizens should have the assurance that the policies of their government will be held up for criticism by a free and independent press without the interference of their government.*"

Bangladeshi media organizations will play an important role as Bangladesh moves towards elections next month; the media will help lay a new foundation for democratic governance in Bangladesh. The media outlets here feature vibrant and talented journalists. Bangladeshi news organizations, such as Radio Today, provide a constructive channel for debate and dissent. As democracy returns, Bangladeshi journalists stand ready to highlight effective policies; to uncover poor governance; and to provide people with the knowledge necessary to make decisions on the important issues Bangladesh will face in the coming weeks, months and years.

In conclusion, I congratulate the management and staff of Radio Today as they celebrate their second anniversary. We look forward to working closely with the station for many years to come. Thank you.

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*\* As prepared for delivery*

**GR/ 2008**